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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

GENERAL BOOKS AND BOOKS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

Das Antike Mysterienwesen in Religionsgeschichtlicher, Ethnologischer und Psychologischer Beleuchtung. Von Dr. K. H. E. DE JONG. (Leiden: E. J. Brill. 1909. Pp. x, 362.)

WITH the present interest in ethnology and the history of religion it is natural that much attention should be given to the ancient mysteries, which on the whole formed the most important element in the spiritual life of antiquity. But, in the nature of the case, the data on which our knowledge here depends are so insufficient and unsatisfactory that the most divergent views are held as to the real character of the rites, and the explanations offered of the effects which were undoubtedly produced have been of the most opposite sort. The latest attempt at explanation is made in the present book by Dr. de Jong of the Hague, whose excellent dissertation (*De Apuleio Isiacorum Mysteriorum Teste*, Leyden, 1900) led him to this larger study.

As the title of his book indicates, Dr. de Jong employs the abundant material which has been amassed by the study of religions other than those of Greece and Rome, as well as the results of ethnological and psychological research. After a short introductory chapter, he reviews in the two following chapters the familiar features of the Eleusinian mysteries and those of Isis and Mithras, which played a most important part in the second to the fourth centuries of our era; he then passes to the consideration of the various explanations which have been offered of the effects secured by the mysteries. In his contention that mere splendor of buildings or of ceremonies, which were certainly simple in the earlier period, was quite insufficient to cause these effects, he is undoubtedly right; nor could the sacred symbols seen or handled have by themselves profoundly influenced the initiates. The explanation is rather to be sought along the line suggested by Aristotle's much quoted statement that the initiates in the mysteries should not learn any definite thing, but be given an experience and be put in a certain state of mind, after being made susceptible thereto. In other words the explanation must be a psychological one, and the whole purpose of all mystic ceremonies and symbols was to produce the "experience and state of mind" of which Aristotle speaks. At this point in his discussion Dr. de Jong announces his belief that all mysteries were essentially magic in their origins at least; and, after an interesting chapter on the part played by magic in the Egyptian cults, he proceeds to support his contention by

illustrations and parallels drawn from varied peoples of antiquity and modern times, ranging from the inevitable Australians and Chinese to the North American Indians.

The text for the last five chapters is furnished by the words of Apuleius: "I have approached the bounds of death; I have trod the threshold of Proserpina, and, after passing through all the elements, I have returned again. At midnight I have seen the sun flashing with a brilliant light; I have approached the gods of heaven and hell and done them obeisance face to face." In these words Dr. de Jong apparently sees the key to the mysteries. In his elucidation of them he discusses ecstatic or hypnotic states, visions of the other world, tests by fire, optical illusions, materialization and suggestion—a wide range, in short, of real and spurious religious experiences among many peoples and sects. In a liberal spirit he treats with respect later mystics and visionaries, including Swedenborg and F. W. H. Myers.

Now although we shall never know exactly the details of the various forms of initiation, probably everyone agrees that in them all the initiate was in some way by fasts, dreams, purificatory rites and other acts put into an ecstatic state in which he was especially responsive to suggestion. It is hard for the present reviewer to see that Dr. de Jong has gone beyond this in the explanations which he offers; his book is interesting and valuable in the collection which it offers of mystic and magical rites gathered from many sources; but edifying as it may be to observe similar practices arising at certain cultural stages among peoples widely separated by time and place, we must not forget that parallelism does not necessarily constitute explanation.

It is to be regretted that the index of the book is wholly inadequate.

CLIFFORD H. MOORE.

The Acropolis of Athens. By MARTIN L. D'OOGHE, Professor of the Greek Language and Literature in the University of Michigan. (New York and London: The Macmillan Company. 1908. Pp. xx, 405, v.)

It is now twenty years since Kabbadias concluded the definitive excavation of the Acropolis. Some part of that long campaign Professor D'Ooge, as director of our school at Athens in 1886-1887, saw with his own eyes; and he has twice returned for a sabbatical study of the subject on the spot.

But he is too wise to undertake even now a final history of the Acropolis; he proposes merely to "give a summary of the most important contributions to this history and to state the results of personal study of the site and of the ruins upon it". In this modest venture his patience and painstaking have stood him in good stead; and the serious student will find the book packed with sifted facts which hitherto he has had to gather for himself from a wide range of writers in various tongues.